



Zero Waste in the Office

It's not just environmental, it's economical!

A zero waste office is not only environmental, but also economical. By implementing the following practices around the office, you can help to produce less waste and save money by reducing operating costs.

The Top Three Ways to Reduce Waste in the Office:

1. Go Digital

Keep Documents Electronic

One of the best ways to deal with waste is to not produce it. Go digital. Here are some ways to go digital:

- Preview documents onscreen before printing.
- Keep files on the computer instead of in file cabinets.
- Use email and voice mail.



2. Bring Your Own Lunch

Bring Your Own Containers

Here are some helpful tips to reduce waste during the lunch hour:

- Bring lunch to work in a reusable container.
- Bring your own coffee/tea mug to work.
- Ordering lunch and having it delivered produces packaging waste. Coordinate with co-workers to place large orders, which produces less waste overall.
- Bring reusable utensils, plates, cups and napkins.
- Ask for take-out in compostable paper or recyclable containers.
- Decline food placed in polystyrene foam food service ware or plastic bags. Skip the extra paper wrapping or paper bag.



3. Recycle

Always Remember to Complete the Loop: Buy Recycled Products

Purchasing products made from recycled materials is one way to limit the amount of resources used at the office.

- Buy office supplies and furniture made from recycled products. Check the Green Business Directory for a list of businesses that sell office supplies and furniture made of recycled content.
- Always buy recycled paper.



Not all recycled paper is made equal. Here are some tips when buying recycled paper.

- Look for recycled paper with a high percentage of post-consumer content.
- Only buy paper that is PCF (processed chlorine feed).
- Buy uncolored paper. If you need to use colored paper, use pastel colors not astrobrights.
- Most major office stores carry paper that fits these standards.

Recycle

- Start a recycling program at work. Click here to visit the business recycling section of this website and find out how.

Recycle Printer Cartridges

- Recycling printer cartridges is often free, and recycled replacements are cheaper than new ones. Check the package for information on how to recycle print cartridges.

Drop-Off Locations

[Kinko's](#)

Mail-back program: Postage-paid envelopes for ink cartridges available at store locations at no charge.

[Office Depot](#)

Empty toner or ink cartridges can be returned with the delivery driver or dropped off at store locations at no charge.

[Staples](#)

Empty ink cartridges can be dropped off at store locations at no charge. Laser cartridges are not accepted.

Mail-Back Programs

Some manufacturers will provide pre-paid return labels or envelopes to return their toner or ink cartridges for reuse or recycling. Check with the manufacturer of your printer cartridge.

Recycling Cartridges for Causes

Some companies will recycle used inkjet cartridges, laser printer cartridges and cell phones for cash.

Still Want To Do More?

Don't forget the other R's at work:

Reduce

- Change the margins on documents to fit more text and use less paper.
- Do not use cover sheets on faxes. Instead use a stick-on label on the first page of a fax.
- Buy products in bulk to minimize packaging.
- Set up computers and copiers to automatically print double-sided.
- Use light weight paper.
- Remove duplicate names and out-of-date entries from mailing lists.
- Use mail-merge, print to a PDF, and review before sending to the printer.
- Make one copy of an announcement and then pass it around to coworkers.

And finally, Reuse

- Reuse envelopes by placing a label over the old address.
- Reuse file folders and shipping boxes.
- Shred newspapers and reuse for packaging.
- Investigate whether local libraries, schools, hospitals, and nursing homes could use your old trade journals or magazines.

